

"When we turned to the subject of local government, nearly a quater of a century ago, our object was to describe the organisation and working of a century ago, our object was to describe the organisation and working of the existing local government authorities, with a view to discovering how they could be improved. We realised from the outset that a merely statistical investigation of what was going on would tell us little or nothing of the standing conditions of disease or health in the social organisations that we were considering. We knew that in order to find the causes of their imperfections and the direction in which they could be improved, we had to study not only their present but their past, not merely what they were doing but how they had come to be doing it. Somewhat naively, we accepted as our starting point the beginning of the nineteenth century. But after a year's work on the records, it became apparent to us that the local institutions of the first quarter of that century were either in the last stages of decay or in the earliest years of infancy. We saw that it was impossible to appreciate the drastic innovations of 1832-36, and their subsequent developments, without going much further back. After some reconnoitring in the seventeenth century, we decided that the Revolution of 1689 ranked in the evolution of English local government, as the beginning of a distinct era, which continued until the Reform Bill of 1832 "

At the time of the "Glorious Revolution" of 1689, and arising out of it, there appeared, they discern, a new policy in fact, one of the most important results of the dismissal of the Stuart dynasty was a "summary end to arbitrary interference with local liberties " Any interference, in fact, became "arbitrary ", and for more than a hundred years, the steady practice of Kings and parliaments,

may, their
settled policy, was one of knowing nothing of
what the
local authorities were doing There was an
"anarchy
of local autonomy," and no system of local
government
whatsoever, indeed, the term "local
government" does
not come into existence until the nineteenth
century Such
organisation as there was, was vocational in
basis, but
broadly it was true to say that,